

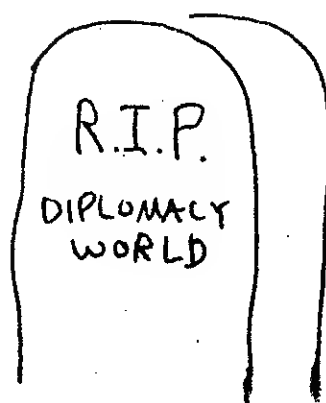
DEC 5 1978

#28
SPECIAL
EDITION

THE

BRUTUS BULLETIN

ET TU, BRUTE



Yes, DW is dead. Conrad von Metzke just confirmed that in the letter attached, and after I missed the scoop on Bob Lipton's fold by a week, I'm not letting THIS one get by! This is a special issue just to spread the word (and be first with it for once). This issue won't count against your sub, and I'm making up a bunch for complimentaries to various editors to help Conrad spread the word. (And hopefully to get me some free publicity too).

The BRUTUS BULLETIN, North America's Number One Dipzine per the 1978 Leeder Poll, is a bi-weekly newsletter of postal DIPLOMACY brought to you by John Michalski, Rt 10, Box 526Q, Moore, Okla 73165. It is available for the pittance of 25¢ an issue, which is darn cheap in view of its typical 2-oz size. Trades have been all but dropped, but subscriptions are welcome. There are a few game openings too:

Bored stiff with the torpid pace of most games? Want experience? FAST? Ever want to play wild, win-big or sink-fast? Well, I have 3 openings left in a TEN DAY DEADLINE game right here! NOT (necessarily) a phone game as many say. Just plan ahead with your ally: "One if by land, two if by sea", get the results, send him a card saying "Situation B has occurred, so I'm doing X, expect you to do Y" and send me a set of orders. I will accept phoned orders for this one, but you can get by without using it. All you miss is the waiting! Suggest to your friends that they sign up now. Or your enemies. (A handful of normal 14-day deadline openings are left also. The 10-day Special and Brutus #.5 will be the last game openings until well into next year). \$2+sub, or \$3 without sub.

An important letter from
CONRAD Von METZKE

PO Box 626
San Diego, CA 92112
12-1-78

John, me buddy,

Ta for the note and SSAE. Okay, you get the honour of having a Hobby Scoop (actually, a few people have been told, but not for publication) - DIPLOMACY WORLD is officially defunct.

When I took over from Walt in toto - just one issue ago - the status was as follows: Unexpired subscriptions owing, roughly \$1200; working capital \$0. This meant that I was required to make up the unexpired subs and finance the production costs of the issues with no financial base on which to draw (except new subs coming in, which of course immediately become both working capital and debts owing in future issues). I counted on renewals, the A-H subsidy and game shop sales to provide the future capital. But within a very short while I learned the following facts: (1) Game shop sales provide very little revenue, (2) The A-H subsidy was due to be terminated soon, and (3) The influx of new subs had dropped off drastically.

So I decided, after long thought, to go for broke - either DW would float free or it would sink and I'd be done with it. I jacked up the sub rates to what I have to confess is an horrendous level. On paper, at least, kicking the price up to 225% its former level may seem insane, but I had, I think, reasonable cause: Inflation had obviously eaten into the "profit margin" (of which there was never much anyway) to the point where \$1.50 per copy is just about the break-even point now; and, an earlier survey I ran showed that the hobby would be willing to pay for a change from quarterly to bi-monthly.

When Issue 19 went out, there were 124 subscriptions expiring. To date, I have received nine renewals. When this atrocious renewal rate first became apparent, I ran a survey among 40 randomly-selected subscribers who had not renewed, to see if (a) they would renew at the old rate, (b) if they would renew at the new rate on a quarterly schedule (i.e. \$6 a year, four issues), or (c) if they had just forgotten to renew. The survey results: two bad addresses, five no-replies, one renewal, and the following answers to the questions from the other 32: (a), yes 14, no 18; (b), yes 5, no 27.

So this means that if I go back to \$4 a year, I will get enough renewals to survive, except that I can't produce DW for that cost and thus will lose money anyway. If I back off to 4 a year at the new rate, \$6, I can probably get a dozen or so more renewals from the expired list, but that's not enough to float.

I consider this situation untenable. I am perfectly willing to produce a quality DW as a labor of love, more or less, but not as a guaranteed money-loser. My attitude is quite simple: If the hobby doesn't want to support the magazine, that's fine. It's entirely their privilege. But I spent too many years and too much money supporting this hobby and its projects (Boardman numbers, Miller numbers, orphan project, etc., etc.) to be interested in going on in that vein. Quite apart from anything else, I cannot now afford it. And Rod Walker is no help at all, financially (and that is not a gripe; why in hell should he be?). Now, it's true that Walt has specifically offered to underwrite any losses on the issues if I will continue production. But after A-H ceases the subsidy, that looks to mean to the tune of \$400 per issue (I'm totalling a cost analysis here without giving the figures; you'll have to trust me), possibly less if renewal rates go back up (as they undoubtedly would when we adjusted our rates and went to a more attractive full-sized product). And of course I needn't mention that Carter hasn't stopped inflation yet, has he?

To be blunt, it ain't worth it. I've agonized on this one for over a month, and have consulted with various people on one aspect or another of the matter (Doug Beyerlein, Eric Verheiden, Rod, Walt, my wife, Don Greenwood of Avalon-Hill); the only one who specifically endorses continuing is Walt.

There's a lot more background than I've given, but I think I'll leave it at that. Should ~~xxxx~~ anyone approach me indicating interest in taking over, I'm quite willing to discuss it; the mailing list is still intact, I have lots of unused supplies, and I'm an absolute fountain of advice. But for the nonce, DW folded with the last issue, and I shall now begin the most painful process of all: refunding unexpired subs. Remember that my working capital for this process is about \$100 (from game shop sales of Issue 20), and there's about \$850 to deal with. So it'll be slow. It'll be done as quickly as possible on a random-draw basis, but it will be done - in fact, I've already begun with the \$100.

And I think that pretty well takes care of my reputation in this hobby for all time to come. Oh well.

Oh - I suppose I ought to warn all GMs reading this that all trades are cancelled; notifying all of you privately would cost me \$30 that has to be used for sub refunds, so I'll just have to hope that the word filters down.

'Bye.

As ever,

